

Remarks

In response to the Office Action mailed March 21, 2005, applicants have amended the claims in the application and requests reconsideration of the amended claims.

Applicants confirm the election of claims 1-6 and 9 without traverse and applicants hereby cancel claims 7, 8 and 10-14 without prejudice as to applicants' right to pursue those claims in a separate co-pending application.

Claims 1, 2, 4-6 and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,909,918 to Takizawa et al. Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1 and 9, as amended, clarify the claims to make them more definite are not anticipated by the Takizawa patent.

The inner panel of the hem assembly as now claimed in claim 1 includes an inner surface and an outer surface on opposite parallel sides and are spaced apart by the thickness of the inner panel. The inner panel has an end that is disposed in a first plane and has a height dimension that is a finite dimension greater than that of an edge or corner, but is less than the thickness of the inner panel. The beveled surface is located between and is contiguous with the end surface and the inner surface. The beveled surface is disposed inboard of the intersection of the first and second planes. In contrast, the Takizawa patent discloses hem flange wherein the hem flange is formed with a bent edge 16a that is further deformed by an outer panel when it is hemmed over the bent edge 16a of the inner panel 16. The end of the flange 16a in Figure 2a the Takizawa patent is of greater vertical extent than the thickness of the panel 16. Bent flange 16a, as shown in Figure 2b, extends from the outer surface of the panel 16 to the end of bent flange 16a. The beveled surface in Figure 2c is not located between and contiguous with the end surface and the inner surface of the inner panel. Further, the beveled surface is not disposed inboard of the intersection of the first and second planes in which the end and inboard surface lie.

Referring to claim 9, the Takizawa patent fails to disclose or suggest an assembly including an inner panel having a peripheral flange of a nominal thickness that defines an end that has a height that is less than the nominal thickness of the flange. Further, the reference fails to disclose a beveled surface located between and contiguous with both the

end and the inboard surface. The beveled surface is also specified as being disposed in a plane that is recessed relative to the end and the inboard surface. Claim 9 has further been amended to recite the structural cooperation of the inner and outer panels where a beveled surface on the inner panel at least partially receives the intermediate portion of the peripheral edge of the outer panel.

Claims 1-6 and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,237,734 to Polon. The Polon patent discloses a method of interlocking hemmed together panel by providing a raised bead 26 on the inner panel of the hem assembly over which the hem of the outer panel is formed to create an interlocking connection between the panels. As to claim 1, the Polon patent fails to disclose an inner panel having a perimeter flange that terminates in an end surface that is disposed in a first plane and has a height that is less than the thickness of the inner panel. Further, the Polon patent fails to disclose a beveled surface located between and contiguous with the end and the inner surface of a perimeter flange. The Polon patent also fails to disclose such a beveled surface wherein the beveled surface is disposed inboard of the intersection of the first and second planes. Claim 9 is not anticipated by the Polon reference because the Polon reference fails to disclose a peripheral flange comprising an end surface that has a height that is less than the nominal thickness of the flange. The Polon reference also fails to disclose a beveled surface being disposed in a plane that is recessed relative to the end and the inboard surface and is contiguous with both the end and the inboard surface.


Claim 3 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takizawa in view U.S. Patent No. 5,613,726 to Hobbs et al. Claim 3 is also rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Polon in view of Hobbs et al. The Hobbs reference is relied upon for its teaching of providing an inner panel formed of a magnesium composite material. Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of claim 3 under either combination of references fails to disclose or suggest a unique structural configuration of the inner panel of the hem assembly that is the subject of claims 1 and 9 as discussed above. The Hobbs reference does not disclose the unique structural features that are the subject of the claims as amended.

Applicants note with appreciation that a telephonic interview was conducted with Examiner Ferguson on May 9, 2005. During the course of the interview, proposed draft amendments to the claims were discussed in detail and Examiner Ferguson clarified the basis for his reliance upon the prior art references that form the basis for his rejection of the claims as original submitted. All of the references applied in the Office Action were discussed. U.S. Patent No. 6,536,983 to Morefield was also discussed. The Morefield patent relates to a crimp joint for gas and fluid distribution system. The crimp joint is formed on generally cylindrical members that are crimped together to form a seal in fluid and gas distribution systems. The Morefield patent is not directed to the problem of providing an improved quality hem having a final hem radius that is of reduced thickness to provide improved hem appearance. The objective of applicants' invention is to provide an improved radius hem by reducing the thickness of the inner panel at the hem.

Applicants have amended the claims remaining the in application to more distinctly claim and more particularly point out applicants' invention. The Examiner is respectfully requested to telephone applicants' undersigned attorney if it would advance the prosecution of this case. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this case to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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